THE VVAY TO A BLESSED ESTATE IN THIS LIFE.

BY

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Julian David her book

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THAT which our Lord Iesus from Heaven writ vnto the Church of *Sardis*; *Thou hast a name that thou liuest, but art dead*, may be truly ſpoken of the greater ſort of not-counterfeit Profeſſors of the Faith in our time: for it is cleare by the Text, that this is not ſpoken of hypocrites, who are ſtarke dead, but Rev. 3. 1.

Many drowsie professors.

of such who having some life remaining in them, are in a dead sleepe: for these of whom I speake, take good paines to keepe vp a name of Christianitie, both in the exercises of Religion, and in their outward behauiour, (though in both there be much fayling) but in very truth there is but a little life of faith and loue in all their Profession, as may appeare in their cold and vncomfortable prayers, in their wandering and drowsie hearing of the Word, and vnfruitfull receiving of the Sacraments, and much more in their abuse and neglect of the secret exercises of Prayer, reading, and meditation by themselues, and conference with others, seldome deepely bewayling their estate, lesse reioycing in the assurance of their salvation by Christ, as seldome delighting in God, with a zeale to set forth his glory in every part of

their life.

Though this be the state of the greater part of those that haue some truth of grace in them, yet may we say againe, that there are with vs, (as in the Church of *Sardus*) *a few names that haue not defiled their garments*, that is, doe liue vnrebukably, and walke worthy their holy calling, having a sweet feeling of Gods favour vnto them, and so can boldly come vnto him in time of need, with assurance that he doth graciously respect them, their prayers, and vnfeigned obedience; who likewise doe more delight themselues in God, then in all earthly things, accounting it their greatest griefe to offend him, and greatest ioy to please him; possessing their soules with confidence and patience in their greatest trialls, looking for the appearing of Christ.

A few worthy.

This is that blessed estate to be

What a blessed life here may be attained.

inioyned in this life, which God hath prepared, (though in divers measures) for the faithfull, all which may well bee contained in this short sentence of the *Psalmist*. Psal. 37.4. *Delight thy selfe in the Lord, and he will giue thee thy hearts desire*: which I doubt not but all true Christians (when they haue well considered it) would be glad to attaine vnto: But either through ignorance of the way how to attaine it; or through negligence; not putting in practise what they know: they spend many yeares, either securely, or vncomfortably, seldome attaining to that heauenly feasting, which (if they were wise) might be their daily refreshing: whose estate I much tendring, doe endeuour to shew them, how this happie life may be attained; which I conceiue to be onely by a more plentifull feeding vpon Christ by faith. It is without que-

Desired by many, not attained.

How this life is attained.

queſtion, that all and every part of our ſpirituall life is in Chriſt, *of whoſe fulneſſe we receiue grace for grace*: and this is as cleare, that we receiue no grace firſt or laſt from Chriſt, but by beleeving: in which reſpect Chriſt is truly and principally ſaid to be our ſpirituall food, and beleeving to be the true feeding vpon him. Which being ſo, it neceſſarily followes, that feeding ſeldome or weakely, we cannot haue much ſpirituall ſtrength: and otherwiſe feeding plentifully and ſoundly, we ſhall be fat, and flouriſhing in grace, and ſo attaine vnto the bleſſed life ſpoken of.

Ioh. 1. 16.

Ioh. 6. 27. 35. 34.

How to feed oft in the day on Chriſt.

For the better vnderſtanding and practiſing whereof, this is ſpecially to be conſidered, How every true beleever may daily, yea, oft in the day, by faith feed vpon Chriſt, that ſo he may receiue from him all ſpirituall nouriſhment, for his refreſhing

and ſtrengthening to every good worke.

This is done by ſetting before vs thoſe ſweet promiſes, which God hath made to vs, for the ſtrengthening of our faith in all our neceſſities: and, ſo particularly to apply them to our ſelues. Whereby we may comfortably aſſure our ſelues, that we ſhall enioy that which God hath promiſed. Wherein we are firſt to get the true meaning of that which is promiſed.

Secondly, To ſee we haue a good warrant, that this is promiſed to vs, that therevpon we may conclude, we ſhall certainly enioy that which God hath promiſed, ſeeing he is faithfull who hath promiſed.

Example. But ſeeing this is not well conceived by many, I will make it plaine by example. 1 *Cor.* I. 30 it is ſaid; *But of him are yee in Chriſt Ieſus, who of God is made vnto vs wiſedome, and righteouſneſſe,*

neſſe, and ſanctification, and redemption. In which is as much ſayd as may be conceived, or deſired; the meaning whereof is, that every true beleever, is by Gods ſpirit made a living member of Chriſt Ieſus, from and in whom, he is made by God a true partaker of all things needfull to ſalvation: that whereas he is by nature fooliſh, guiltie, filthy, and in bondage, now in Chriſt he is made perfectly wiſe righteous, holy, freed from all his enemies, and ſo reſtored to full happineſſe. This promiſe of God being clearely vnderſtood, muſt now be applyed particularly by every beleever to himſelfe, thus: Seeing God who is all-ſufficient; and faithfull, that in his Word, which is Truth it ſelfe, promiſed theſe great benefits (in which all are contained) to every true beleever, therefore I, who doe truly, though weakely, beleeue in Chriſt

Christ, may boldly assure my selfe, that all these be mine, and therefore I shall not want any thing needfull for my present comfort, or eternall happinesse. Which whosoever doth daily practise in this manner to maintaine, and increase his faith by application of this, and all other of Gods promises, he shall daily more and more enioy in this life that blessed estate wee speake of.

Pray for faith.

But for as much as faith is the gift of God, and we cannot further beleeue then wee be drawne by Gods spirit, therefore wee must ioyne often and fervent prayer, that God by this meanes would increase our faith.

Not easie.

This may seeme easie to be performed, but vpon better triall, it will not be found so easie to doe it effectually; for besides our owne great vntowardnesse to beleeve, I cannot thinke of

of any dutie, wherein our common Adverſary, will vſe more cunning, and diligence to hinder vs, then in this: either by keeping vs from the worke, or beguiling vs in it: whereby it comes to paſſe, that very few doe (to any good purpoſe) practiſe the ſame.

Amongſt many lettes which hinder the faithfull practiſe hereof, I obſerue theſe two, in two divers ſorts of beleevers. The former in thoſe, who not ſufficiently feeling their wants, and too much contented with their eſtate, doe not ſo prize Chriſt, and this bleſſed eſtate in him, as may moue them to take this paines, and therefore neuer reach vnto this growth in grace wherevnto they might come, if the fault were not in themſelues. The other let is in thoſe who highly prizing the benefit, and earneſtly labouring for it, are by the ſenſe of their owne vn-

Two chiefe letts.

1. Not prizing Chriſt.

2. Our vnworthines.

vnworthineſſe, ſo kept downe' that they cannot with any hope looke vp, for ſo great a bleſſing.

Remoue of the firſt let.

For the remooving of both theſe lettes, the firſt ſort are to bethinke themſelues, what an vncomfortable account it will be, when God ſhall call them to it, to ſee how many yeares they haue ſpent, with little growth in grace, either to the glory of God, or good example to others, or to the peace of their owne ſoules. Whereas on the other ſide, they might haue attained vnto ſuch a ſweet life, as would haue beene a heauen vpon earth; namely, *To reioyce alwayes in the Lord.*

Of the ſecond let.

For the other poore ſoules, who are kept downe with the ſenſe of their owne vnworthineſſe, they are to know, that all Gods promiſes, are free and vndeſerved, ſo as no vnworthines ought to hinder them from beleeving:

leeving: yea, rather they that haue the moſt ſenſe of their owne vnworthineſſe, haue moſt incouragement to beleeve, for that voice of Chriſt, *Come vnto me all you that are weary and heavie laden, and I will eaſe you*: ſerue not onely for our firſt converſion, but in all our diſtreſſes whatſoever, throughout the whole courſe of our life. Mat. 11, 28.

If any eſcape both theſe lets, and goe about this worke, then will Satan vſe all his skill to beguile both ſorts: ſuch as are weake and heauie hearted, ſoone diſcouraged, he tempts and perſwades, they labour in vaine, and doe not beleeue, when indeed they doe, as ſhall appeare. The other ſort who are too well conceited, and light hearted, Satan labours to perſwade, that they haue more faith then indeed they haue, and that their caſe is better then in truth it is.

Satan will beguile;

Some that they beleeue not;

Others, that they haue more faith then they haue.

It

It ſhall be therefore the wiſedome of all who will not be deceived, carefully to examine and try themſelues; which that they may the better doe, let them conſider of theſe markes that follow: whereby either ſort may certainely iudge of themſelues.

Foure markes of faith not ſeene.

For ſuch as conſcionably endevour to nouriſh their faith in ſuch manner as hath beene ſhewed, and yet finde no comfort, but feare they doe not beleeue, (when as indeed they doe) theſe are to diſcerne their faith by ſuch ſecret operations, as doe certainely ſhew faith to be there, though it be not ſeene: namely, An vnfeigned griefe for the want of faith, with an vnceſſant indevour for the attaining of it. Againe, A reverent eſteeme of God, and hearty affection of vnfeigned loue to him, which cannot be without ſome former apprehenſion of Gods

1. Griefe for want of faith.
2. Conſtant labour for it.
3. True loue to God.

Gods loue to them, which is in many, (though they ſee it not). And laſtly, A tender Conſcience, fearing to diſpleaſe God, even in ſmaller matters, which others little regard. Whoſoever ſhall find theſe fruits, (which cannot come but from faith) may certainly know, that there is a roote of faith grounded in their hearts, though they ſee it not. But ſuch as haue no feeling of their faith, and ſee no ſuch effects in their liues, haue iuſt cauſe to thinke that they haue no faith at all.

4. A tender conſcience.

No fruits: no faith.

As for the other ſort, who are too well perſwaded of themſelues, that they finde comfort in meditating on Gods promiſes, whereas indeed they deceiue themſelues, and haue not that faith they imagine, as their fruits doe ſhew.

Notes of true and falſe comfort.

This may be diſcerned by theſe notes;

Firſt, True comfort is vſually

1. True, is hardly got,

ly very heardly gotten, with much prayer and labour, and it is oft a long time before this be felt: therefore they who vpon their first thoughts on these promises, finde comfort that they haue part in them, may so farre mistrust, all is not sound, till they shall see some better proofe thereof: which if they doe not, but for all this will be confident, that all is well, it is to be feared, their comfort is not sound.

2. Feare of deceit.

For this is another propertie of that true comfort which springs from faith, especially in young and weake beleevers, that they (so highly valewing the benefit) are very fearefull of being deceived, and must see good evidence, before they will be perswaded, that they haue this saving faith.

3. Poore in spirit, mourne, and lowly.

Whereof if they shall be perswaded, yet therwithall is ioyned such a feeling of the weakenesse of

of their faith, and ſo of all grace, as makes them poore in their owne eyes, and mourne for their wants, thinking lowly of themſelues, and more highly reuerencing the graces of God in others. Whereas they who be deceiued, are as the *Laodiceans*, rich and wanting nothing, and ſo be merry, and too light hearted, thinking too well of themſelues, and too ſlenderly of others, better then themſelues.

4 Hunger and labour for more.

Another ſure marke of ſenſible faith and comfort, is this; That they that haue taſted of it, can never be ſatisfied, but ſtill hunger and labour for more: none more diligently vſe all good meanes to grow in grace then they: Even as the ſtrong and moſt healthfull bodie, doth feed better then the weake and ſickly. But ſuch as being well ſatisfied with that they haue, and feele no hunger, nor labour for more, it is euident their faith and

and comfort are not good.

5. Answerable obedience.

To proceed, and not to gather all that might be added hereto, this shall serue for all; That as like fire, like heate: so like faith, like life, great or small. So that where there is strong faith, there must needs be great obedience, and therefore whosoever hee be that is careless of his conversation, and barren in the fruits of a holy life, his faith must needs be weake, if not dead.

Wherefore to conclude, I advise every one, who by these markes shall discerne himselfe to be deceived, with fancie in stead of faith; to goe about this worke more seriously, and to lay a better foundation of faith, and not to say, he hath found comfort, till he can bring good witnesse thereof. Which whosoever shall neglect, shall in the end (to say no more) lament his folly, when he who seeing his errour, shall more carefully and con-

conſtantly put in practiſe this maine dutie of daily feeding vpon *Chriſt*, ſhall grow in grace, and attaine to that bleſſed life here, whereof we ſpeake beſides eternall life: the full reward of all his labours.

(∵)

FINIS.